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## **Coalition Formation and the Regime Divide in Central Europe**

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### Abstract

The study examines the formation of coalitions in East Central Europe after the democratic transitions of 1989. Existing explanations of coalition formations, which focus on either office-seeking and minimum winning considerations, or on policy-seeking and spatial ideological convergence. However, they fail to account for the coalition patterns in the new democracies of East Central Europe. Instead, these parties' first goal is to develop clear and consistent reputations. To that end, they will form coalitions exclusively within the two camps of the regime divide: that is, amongst parties stemming from the former communist parties, and those with roots in the former opposition to the communist regimes. The two corollaries are that defectors are punished at unusually high rates, and the communist party successors seek, rather than are sought for, coalitions. This model explains 85% of the coalitions that formed in the region after 1989. The study then examines the communist successor parties, and how their efforts illustrate these dynamics.

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## I. Introduction

The patterns of coalition formation in East Central Europe are as diverse as they are puzzling. Since the ability to form stable governing coalitions is a basic precondition of effective democratic governance in multi-party parliamentary systems, several explanations have emerged of how political parties form such coalitions. They have contributed greatly to our understanding of how mature democracies function, but they have been less successful in accounting for the patterns of coalition formation in the new democracies of East Central Europe after the 1989 regime transitions.

Party coalitions in East Central Europe have assumed a variety of forms. Some parties have formed stable coalitions between ideologically close allies. For example, the Czech government coalition from 1992 to 1996 was heralded as an example of mature coalition formation and stability, and was easily explained by spatial theories of coalition formation. However, parties in other countries, such as Poland, rejected the very idea of similar coalitions, despite ideological proximity and complementary policy goals. Instead, they formed unstable and conflictual coalitions with second- or even third-best alternatives. Finally, in some cases, parties from extreme ends of the political spectrum unexpectedly formed alliances, as in Slovakia.

Such patterns run counter to the expectations derived from existing theories of coalition formation. Below, I first examine the existing explanations, and the coalitions they predict in East Central Europe. While no theory claims to predict all cases of coalition formation, these explanations seem unusually weak in accounting for the post-communist cases. Therefore, using survey data and the historical record to re-examine the pattern of coalition formation, I argue that there may be a more parsimonious explanation

of coalition patterns in the region. The fundamental predictor of coalition formation continues to be the “regime divide”—the depth and character of the conflict between the successors to the ruling communist parties of the pre-1989 *ancien regime*, and the parties emerging from the communist-era opposition to these regimes. The deeper this divide, the lower the chances of coalitions forming on the basis of similar policy goals or ideology between the communist successors and their opposition counterparts.

The article then examines the coalition formation efforts of the communist successor parties and their outcomes. Even where these parties have succeeded in moderating their ideology and policy preferences, and in remaking themselves into social democratic parties, the regime divide can prevent them from forming coalitions with parties that share their preferences regarding ideology or policy. While this cleavage shows signs of waning, the expectation of electoral punishment has prevented policy-convergent coalitions in the region for over a decade. Thus, the article builds on existing theories of coalition formation, while emphasising the peculiarities of post-authoritarian transitions, and the constraints they impose on coalition building.

#### **I. Existing explanations and their predictions**

Throughout the literature, coalitions have been defined as a collection of government parties. Most scholars have agreed that if a) the party composition changes, b) an election takes place, or c) the prime minister of the cabinet changes, that particular coalition is said to end.<sup>1</sup> A stable coalition (the equilibrium) is reached when “a protocoalition V will form a viable government if there is no alternative coalition A which is supported by parties controlling more legislative votes than those supporting V, and which all parties

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<sup>1</sup> Lijphart, Arend. “Measures of Cabinet Durability: a Conceptual and empirical evaluation.” *Comparative Political Studies*, July 1984: 265-279.

supporting A prefer to form rather than V.”<sup>2</sup> Three main explanations of this process of coalition formation have emerged.

The explanation that has dominated the field<sup>3</sup> posits that parties are office-seeking, and will seek to form a “minimum winning coalition”—the collection of parties with the minimum number of seats over the majority in the legislature.<sup>4</sup> If the office-seeking model holds, parties will form coalitions irrespective of ideological differences, with partners that create coalitions with a minimum number of seats over a parliamentary majority.<sup>5</sup> Majority governments will dominate, and office-seeking parties will bandwagon onto the proto-coalition, in an effort to gain the spoils of office. Therefore, we should see parties in East Central Europe form coalitions irrespective of their historical roots or ideological preferences. Since the new parties in the region have been initially described as having vague ideologies, few clear policy differences, and office as their main goal, there are even more grounds to expect that the coalitions in the region will follow the minimum winning coalition model.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Budge, Ian and Laver, Michael “Coalition Theory, Government Policy, and Party Policy,” in Michael Laver and Ian Budge, eds *Party Policy and Government Coalitions* New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992, p. 6. By extension, government coalitions are “policy viable” if its “policy position is such that there is no alternative executive coalition that can put forward a credible policy position that is preferred to the incumbent government by a majority of legislators.”

<sup>3</sup> Laver, Michael. “Between theoretical elegance and political reality: deductive models and cabinet coalitions in Europe,” in Pridham, Geoffrey, ed. *Coalitional Behaviour in Theory and Practice* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Axelrod, Robert. *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic Books, 1984. Dodd, Lawrence. *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Gamson, William. “A Theory of Coalition Formation,” *American Sociological Review*. 1961: 373-382. Leiserson.

<sup>5</sup> Riker, William. *The Theory of Political Coalitions*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962. Baron, David and Ferejohn, John. “Bargaining in Legislatures,” *APSR* 1989:1182-1206.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Agh, Attila. “The Hungarian Party System and Party Theory in the Transition of Central Europe.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. April 1994: 217-238, Lewis, Paul. “Political Institutionalisation and Party Development in Post-communist Poland.” *Europe-Asia Studies*. No 5 1996: 779-799, Bielasiak, Jack. “Substance and Process in the Development of Party Systems in East Central Europe” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol.30, No.1 1997: 23-44, Kopecky, Petr. “Developing Party Organizations in East-Central Europe,” *Party Politics*, 1995, No. 4: 515-534, Kiss 1992, Racz, Barnabas. “The Socialist-Left Opposition in Hungary,” *Europe-Asia Studies* #4, 1993: 647-670, Zubek, Voytek. “The Fragmentation of Poland’s Political Party System.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, March 1993: 47-71.

However, given the proliferation of minority governments (35%, according to Strom 1984<sup>7</sup>), and super-majority governments in Western Europe, many scholars have relaxed the assumption of pure office-seeking. Instead, parties have been found to seek policy, as well as office. In this case, both a minority and a super-majority government would be acceptable, provided that the coalition partners agreed on the policy goals. Therefore, the notion of a minimum *connected* winning coalition has been introduced,<sup>8</sup> which posits that in parties form coalitions with ideologically proximate partners. In these “spatial proximity” models, policy goals, rather than office-seeking, underlies coalition formation, and the coalition parties will tend to converge in a zone of agreement on policy or ideology.<sup>9</sup> If only one policy dimension is relevant, there is no “jumping over” of ideological neighbors in coalition formation.<sup>10</sup> If there are several relevant policy dimensions, however, coalition bargaining may become unstable.<sup>11</sup> Both political institutions and allocation of policy portfolios to cabinet ministers with considerable policy autonomy cut down on the range of credible alternative coalitions, and reduce this instability.<sup>12</sup>

If this explanation holds, we should see only ideologically-proximate coalitions—that is, parties will form coalitions that minimize policy differences, in comparison with other

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<sup>7</sup> Strom, Kaare. “Minority Governments in Parliamentary Democracies.” *Comparative Political Studies*, July 1984: 199-227.

<sup>8</sup> de Swaan, Abram. *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formation*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1973.

<sup>9</sup> See Laver, Michael, and Shepsle, Kenneth. “Government Coalitions and Intraparty Politics,” *BJPS October 1990*: 489-507, Schofield, Norman. “Existence of a ‘structurally stable’ equilibrium for a non-collegial voting rule.” *Public Choice* 1986: 267-284. Austen-Smith, David and Jeffrey Banks. “Stable portfolio allocations” *APSR* 1990: 891-906. Parties can of course seek office, in order to gain policy gains.

<sup>10</sup> The emphasis, however, is still on majority winning criterion, which which may not be appropriate for considering executive coalitions (the collection of parties making up the cabinet), as opposed to the legislative coalition (the collection of parties sustaining the government in office). Budge and Laver in Laver and Budge.

<sup>11</sup> McKelvey, Robert. “General Conditions for Global Intransitivities in Formal Voting Models,” *Econometrica*, 1979: 1085-1111.

<sup>12</sup> Budge, Ian and Keman, Hans. *Parties and Democracy* Cambridge: CUP, 1990, Laver and Shepsle 1990.

possible proto-coalitions. Both minority and majority governments are in keeping with this analytical framework, since the goals are no longer zero-sum. Therefore, in East Central Europe, we should see coalitions that coalesce around common policy goals, such as the large (if vague) initial support for economic and administrative restructuring, irrespective of the party histories or the resulting size of the coalition.

Four assumptions of rationality underlie both of these approaches—a) each party is treated as a unitary actor, b) coalition governments must command majority support in legislature, c) parties are motivated by either office or policy or both, and d) all winning combinations of parties represent possible coalition governments.<sup>13</sup>

However, there are strong reasons to suggest that this last assumption should be relaxed. Elsewhere, parties which have the reputation of being a threat to the democratic system, or whose past alliances are unacceptable to the other parties' electorates, have been kept out of coalitions. Thus, most West European communist parties have been excluded from government, despite policy positions that are often close to government parties. Neither pure office-seeking nor pure policy-seeking explanations can account for these patterns.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to these models, therefore, we can assume that some coalition governments are more probable than others. We then have to specify which constraints or criteria will exclude parties from consideration as coalition partners.

The main constraint that fundamentally influences coalition formation in the new democracies of East Central Europe is the regime divide between the parties originating from the communist regime, and those with roots in the former opposition to these communist parties. The regime divide consists of the depth and character of the conflict

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<sup>13</sup> Laver in Pridham, p. 34.

between the communist rulers and their opposition prior to the democratic transitions of 1989: whether it consisted of repression or negotiation, and if the latter, whether this negotiation was dominated by conflict or consensus. The more repressive or conflictual the relationship, and the more recent the conflict, the deeper the divide, and the less likely the possibility of democratic cooperation.<sup>15</sup>

The fundamental reason for the strength of the regime divide is that parties in a new democratic system seek to establish clear and stable reputations, first and foremost. Such reputations are the crucial signals by which both the voters and the other parties evaluate electoral appeals and policy proposals. In the established, mature democracies that are the analytical focus of minimal winning or spatial models, scholars can (and do) take for granted that parties have established such reputations.

In new democracies, however, party reputations are a goal unto itself, rather than a given. Like others, party reputations are acquired through repeated, consistent, and sustained behavior,<sup>16</sup> and consistency in parliamentary behavior lends credibility to party

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<sup>14</sup> Budge, Ian, David Robertson, and Derek Hearl, eds. *Ideology, Strategy, and Party Change*. Cambridge: CUP, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> This definition of the regime divide differs from the existing accounts, such as Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gabor Toka. *Post Communist Party Systems*. Cambridge: CUP, 1999, in two ways. First, it specifies the grounds for the regime divide differently—rather than looking at broad factors such as “type of communist regime,” it looks at the history of the interactions between the two sets of actors directly. In Kitschelt’s specification, we would expect identical results for Poland and for Hungary, given the similarities in the regime type. That the outcomes vary suggests that “type of communist regime” is not the relevant independent variable. Second, this account gives the regime divide primacy over other factors. Kitschelt et al have argued that coalitions in the region are facilitated by a) crystallised program cohesion, b) moderate polarization, c) a shallow regime divide, and d) institutional design of executive-legislative relations (the stronger the president, the lower the collaboration amongst parties). However, as Kitschelt notes, the regime divide is deepest in the Czech Republic and in Bulgaria, yet collaboration potential is highest in the Czech Republic and in Hungary. Therefore, in his account, program cohesion trumps both regime divides and party polarisation, although there is little empirical justification for this stance, given the historical roots he posits for programmatic cohesion as well. Kitschelt et al, pp. 346-7.

<sup>16</sup> Dixit, Avinash and Nalebuff, *Thinking Strategically* New York: Norton, 1991, Schelling, Thomas. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.



claims.<sup>17</sup> However, the new democratic system could not provide the time and opportunity for several iterations of the parliamentary game. Therefore, no political party could rely on its record of parliamentary behavior to establish their credibility immediately after 1989. Instead, in the absence of an established parliamentary record, the parties' pre-democratic past determined their coalition potential. Specifically, the greater the conflict between the communist party and its opposition prior to 1989, the greater the divide between their successors. This cleavage between the two "camps" of the communist era continued after the transition to democracy in 1989, on the strength of not only personal antagonisms, but of the need to establish party identities and reputations.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, we should expect that parties will form coalitions within their respective "camps" (that is, groupings of parties originating in either the former regime or the former opposition), even if their ideological or policy stances are actually closer to parties from the opposite camp. The more negotiation and consensus between the two sides, on the other hand, the more likely the parties were to cooperate on the basis of ideological proximity and policy goals, rather than their institutional origins.

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<sup>17</sup> Franklin, Mark and Thomas Mackie. "Familiarity and Inertia in the Formation of Governing Coalitions in Parliamentary Democracies," *British Journal of Political Science* July 1983: 275-298 Laver, Michael, and Shepsle, Kenneth. *Making and Breaking Governments* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> These reputations consisted of the perceptions (by the electorate and other parties) of a given party's commitment to the new democratic system and its norms, its commitment to economic transformation, a credible commitment to competence, and the party's stance on religious or nationalist issues. Reputation and credibility are so crucial a concern that political parties have been found to pursue credibility even when doing so adversely affects their short-term goals. (Laver and Shepsle 1996, pp. 19 and 248.) If such reputation becomes a key concern for parties, then it calls into question the perspective advocated by some analysts of parliamentary behavior—that we should think of parliaments as single firms, established to monitor members in team production (in this case, of policy), to prevent opportunistic behavior. Saalfeld, Thomas. "Rational Choice Theory in Legislative Studies: Models of Politics without Romanticism," *Journal of Legislative Studies*. 1995, #1, pp. 32-64, p. 54. Parties are not concerned so much with the overall performance of the parliament, but with their ability to affect the outcome, and as such, act more as firms competing with each other than as "members" of a single firm.

Once parties decide they will form coalitions only within their respective camps, they have a limited number of potential partners. If they have a choice, they will pick as partners those parties closest to them on policy issues (thus furthering their reputation as consistent and pragmatic).<sup>19</sup> This is because we assume that parties seek policy, as other European parties do, and that the regime divide is keeping them from pursuing this aim freely.<sup>20</sup> If there are few parties within the same camp, they will simply form coalitions with all the parties within their camp, whether or not this guarantees a majority or proximity on policy/ ideology.

There are two corollaries to this postulate. First, since the parties with roots in the anti-communist opposition have “won,” (the democratic system they sought has replaced the communist system once defended by the parties of the old regime), we should see an asymmetry in coalition formation. That is, the communist successor parties are more likely to reach out and be open to coalitions, while the opposition successor parties will be more likely to refuse to form coalitions with the post-communists, either *a priori* or by rejecting the communist successors’ offers.

Second, parties which cross the divide and form coalitions with parties from the opposite camp should be punished by either the electorate or the other parties at unusually high rates (irrespective of their performance or incumbency effects) during the next electoral/ coalition formation cycle. This should affect those who *join* the coalition (and thereby “betray” their camp and electorate) more than those who *form* the coalition.

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<sup>19</sup> Herbert Kitschelt and his associates have argued that policy distance affects the sympathy of elites for other parties, and that both distance and salience of policy help to determine these sympathies. Kitschelt et al, p. 361.

<sup>20</sup> Or at least parties *act* as if they pursue policy. Parties need to maintain their long-term credibility, both with voters and with other parties, which can make even office-seeking politicians act as if they sought policy and the common good. (Laver and Shepsle, 1996.)

Finally, under what conditions will the regime divide no longer matter? As the size of the “punishment” decreases, the likelihood of cross-camp coalitions increases. Three conditions permit this: a) if parties care less about their reputation, or b) other sources of party reputation trump the regime divide, or c) voters no longer punish the “traitors.” Since parties do not form certain coalitions for fear of electoral backlash,<sup>21</sup> party preferences can also change as polls reveal changes in the attitudes of electorates towards potential partners.<sup>22</sup> So long as party elites perceive that they will be punished electorally in the next round, they have a disincentive to form coalitions with parties from the other camps. However, when a party that formed a coalition across the divide is not punished by the electorate, the likelihood of other parties forming similar coalitions increases.<sup>23</sup>

There are several ways in which these conditions hold: for example, if there is a threat to the democratic system itself, all other parties may “close ranks” and form a cross-camp coalition against an anti-democratic party. Alternatively, policy pressures (such as those coming from international organisations, economic crises, or security conflicts) could also be an imperative for cross-camp coalitions. Finally, time itself is likely to have two effects: generational change means that a new cohort of voters and politicians, who had no stake in the former conflict, will come forth. Moreover, with time, the parties will develop parliamentary and electoral records, which determine the reputations of political parties in established democracies in the West.

To summarize, in new democracies, the politicians’ first concern is to establish clear and stable reputations. In a post-transition system, the regime divide is the most

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<sup>21</sup> Laver in Pridham, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Laver in Pridham, p. 41.

fundamental divide, and as such, the clearest source of such identity. Therefore, coalitions will form only within the constraints of the regime divide. If parties cross this divide, they are punished by the electorate, and the regime divide will persist so long as parties care about their reputations, or voters continue to punish defection.

The three models, and their chief characteristics, are summarized below:

Model	Minimum Winning Coalition	Spatial Proximity/ Directional Models	Regime Divide
Assumptions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. parties as unitary actors</li> <li>2. coalition governments must command majority support in legislature</li> <li>3. parties are motivated by office</li> <li>4. all parliamentary parties are potential coalition partners</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. parties as unitary actors</li> <li>2. coalition governments must command majority support in legislature</li> <li>3. parties are motivated by policy</li> <li>4. all parliamentary parties are potential coalition partners</li> </ol>	As in spatial proximity, but Assumption 4 is relaxed: only some parties in parliament can form coalitions together.
Parties' goal	Office	Policy	Reputation
Determinants of coalitions	Size considerations	Ideological Proximity/ Ministerial Portfolios Complement each other	Regime Divide
Predicted Outcomes	Coalitions will form such that the total number of seats occupied by the coalition partners is the minimum number beyond the majority.	Coalitions will minimize ideological distance, and the coalition partners will exhibit centripetal tendencies.	Coalitions will form only within the "regime camps:" among parties with roots in either the former regime, or the former opposition.

### Methodology

To test these hypotheses, I compiled a record of all government coalitions after 1989 in the Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary.<sup>24</sup> Other scholars have examined elite sympathies regarding other parties as a basis for testing hypotheses of coalition formation.<sup>25</sup> However, this may be misleading, insofar that a politician's dislike

<sup>23</sup> Parties that would be most likely not to be punished by the electorate for crossing the regime divide are those who base their appeals on non-ideological competence and administrative effectiveness, with centrist, pragmatist electorates.

<sup>24</sup> I excluded the first Polish coalition after the semi-free elections of June 1989, since it mandated how many seats a given party could hold, and which ministries were held by the ruling communist party.

<sup>25</sup> Toka, Gabor. "The Hierarchy of issue Domains in Inter-Party Relations in East Central Europe with a Directional Model of Coalition Formation," Paper presented for the meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 3-6, 1998, Kitschelt et al 1999.

of a party that receives either 2% or 70% of the vote is irrelevant for the subsequent formation of coalitions: under the rules existing in each of the cases studied, the first party would not enter parliament, while the latter would have no need for coalition partners.

To see whether the minimum winning coalition model held, I examined whether the actual coalition, or other party combinations, could better approximate a minimum winning coalition. In all cases but Hungary, this consisted of a simple majority.<sup>26</sup> Tested against the actual record of coalition formation, the minimum-winning-coalition explanation predicted 20% of the coalitions correctly. This is even less than the 34% the minimum-winning-coalition model has been found to predict in Western Europe.<sup>27</sup> The rest of the coalitions were either under- or over-sized, despite the availability of other coalition parties. Thus, both the ODS and the CSSD led minority governments in the Czech Republic, and no majority government existed in Poland until 1993. Two out of the three Hungarian governments were too small for the 2/3 super-majority required for major constitutional changes, but too big by the simple majority standard.

To test the spatial proximity model, I used expert evaluations of the parties' stances on two sets of issues: their economic policies and their declarations of "worldviews"—stances on religion in the public sphere, nationalism, and cultural openness.<sup>28</sup> First, much of the empirical tests for these expectations share the assumption of Lijphart and Budge

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<sup>26</sup> In Hungary, the new legislative rules stipulated that several major pieces of legislation had to have a super-majority—2/3 of the parliament. However, to give the greatest chance to the minimum winning coalition hypothesis, I coded simple majority Hungarian coalitions as compliant with its predictions.

<sup>27</sup> Budge and Keman, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Kitschelt, Herbert, "The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe," *Politics and Society*, March 1992: 7-50. Markowski, Radoslaw. "Political Parties and Ideological Spaces in East Central Europe" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* #3, 1997: 221-254., Zubek, Voytek. "The Reassertion of the Left in Post-Communist Poland," *Europe-Asia Studies*, no.5, 1994: 801-837, Huber, John and Inglehart,

and Keman, that the social-bourgeois economic divide is the fundamental one around which the Left-Right spectrum is structured.<sup>29</sup> In East Central Europe, public opinion polls also show that the economic situation is the foremost concern of the voters.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, in identifying the ideological distance between the parties, the first dimension consists of economic policy considerations, and the parties' stances.

The other major dimension of party competition in East Central Europe runs along a spectrum from secular/ cosmopolitan/ liberal to religious/ nationalist/ authoritarian stances.<sup>31</sup> This "worldview" dimension dominated the political discourse at several points: in Poland from 1991 to 1992 (over questions of abortion and religions in schools), in Slovakia and in Hungary intermittently (over questions of minorities and nationalism), and in the Czech Republic (during the recent debates over Roman minority policies). The regime divide cross-cuts the worldview dimension (as well as the economic): debates over these issues raged between and within both camps.<sup>32</sup>

To determine whether the coalition patterns were consistent with the expectations of the spatial model, I used a two-step measure. First, I measured the average Euclidean ("as the crow flies") distance between the coalition partners on both the dimensions of

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Ronald. "Expert Interpretations of Party Space and Party Locations in 42 Societies," *Party Politics* vol. 1, No. 1, 1995: 73-111.

<sup>29</sup> Lijphart, Arend. *Democracies* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

<sup>30</sup> Kitschelt 1992, 1994. Evans, Geoffrey, and Whitefield, Stephen. "Economic Ideology and Political Success," *Party Politics* October 1995: 565-578. Agh, Attila. "The Hungarian Party System and Party Theory in the Transition of Central Europe." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. April 1994: 217-238, Bunce, Valerie, and Csanadi, Maria. "Uncertainty in Transition: Post-Communists in Hungary." *East European Politics and Societies*, Spring 1993: 240-273, Cotta, Maurizio. "Building party system after the dictatorship: the East European cases in a comparative perspective," in Geoffrey Pridham and Tatu Vanhanen, ed. *Democratization in Eastern Europe: domestic and international perspectives*. London: Routledge, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Kitschelt 1992.

<sup>32</sup> This cross-cutting cleavage, and the attention paid to the statements regarding intent of potential coalition partners during the formation process, thus prevents the conflation of a worldview ("anti-communist, nationalist" or "conciliatory, cosmopolitan") with the regime divide as a determinant of coalition formation.

competition, and then compared these distances to other potential coalitions. However, since the saliency of a given cleavage may differ from party system to party system, a fairer test of the spatial proximity explanation should examine which coalitions would have formed if this other dimension dominated the process of coalition formation. In other words, would the coalitions be ideologically connected on *either* dimension of party competition? I therefore measured the average ideological distance of coalition and would-be coalition partners on each of the two individual dimensions.<sup>33</sup>

The results show that 55% of the coalitions are connected on the “worldview” dimension, and 35% of coalitions are closest to each other on the economic “dimension.” Only 25% of the coalitions that formed minimized the average Euclidean distance between the stances on *both* dimensions. This is considerably less than the 85% of West European coalitions explained by a broadly policy-based theory.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, among some of the odder bedfellows that resulted were the coalitions of the economically reformist SdRP with the ultra-populist PSL in Poland in 1993-7, the liberal UW with the populist AWS in Poland after 1997, the social democratic SDL’ with the Christian Democratic KDH in Slovakia in 1994, and again in 1998, and the liberal (in its worldview) Fidesz with the conservative MDF in Hungary in 1998. Among the coalitions that should have formed, but did not, were the leftist coalition of the Czech Social Democrats with the post-communists in 1997, the populist HZDS with the leftist SDL’ in

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<sup>33</sup> Of course, these measures are not precise, and are relative, rather than absolute, criteria. There are two reasons: first, it is unclear whose “stance” represents the party’s: the members, activists, or the party elites? Even assuming a unitary party, and averaging these three, we are not likely to obtain a precise evaluation. Second, expert evaluations are also subjective, with considerable “standard errors.” Therefore, these measures are more of an indicator of relative proximity, rather than of absolute stances.

<sup>34</sup> Budge and Keman, p. 44. Budge and Keman argue that parties will first form coalitions among parties that do not present a threat to democracy, then among those who are on the similar side of the socialist-bourgeois divide. If the latter divide does not exist, coalition formation reverts back to size considerations.

Slovakia in 1992, and again in 1994-8, and the secular, pro-reform UW-SdRP coalition in Poland after 1993, and again in 1997.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, to examine the effects of the regime divide, I traced the histories of the parties. If all the coalition parties came from *either* the former opposition to communist rule, or from the former communist rulers, the coalition was coded as complying with the expectations of the regime divide model. As we can see from Table 1, 85% of the coalitions were made up of parties with common roots in either the “communist government” or “communist opposition” camps.

The results are summarised below. As we can see, more coalitions conformed to the expectations of the regime divide model than of either the minimum winning coalition model or the spatial proximity models.

**TABLE 1. Determinants of coalition formation in East Central Europe after 1989**

Coalition model:	Minimum Winning	Spatial Proximity			Regime Divide
		Economic Issues	Worldview Issues	Both	
Number of Coalitions Predicted Correctly	4 20%	7 35%	11 55%	5 25%	17 85%

The model further predicts that parties within the regime divide will form coalitions based on policy proximity. 65%, or 11 out of 17, of the one-regime camp coalitions conform to this expectation on at least one dimension of policy, and 24% (4 out of 17) do so on both main dimensions of policy proximity. This is not a surprising result—within the constraints of a regime divide “camp,” it would be more difficult to find partners that agree on policy, than if the regime divide did not limit the choices.

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<sup>35</sup> Zubek, Voytek. “The Fragmentation of Polands’ Political Party System,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, March 1993: 47-71, p. 53.



In addition, to examine whether the corollary of asymmetry held (communist successors find other parties more attractive as coalition partners than vice versa), I replicated the results of (Kitschelt et al 1999) regarding how “representative” the communist successor parties were seen by the rest of the electorate, and compared the results to how the communist successor supporters saw the rest of the parties.

The results show a general asymmetry between how desirable the two camps are to each other’s supporters, thus partly explaining why communist successors seek coalitions, rather than other parties seeking coalitions with them. (See Table 2)

**TABLE 2. Indicators of asymmetry in coalition-seeking.**<sup>36</sup>

Scale: 1-7, with 7 as most representative.	Poland	Czech	Slovak	Hungarian
Representativeness ranking of communist successor party by other voters	3.45	2.49	3.14	3.32
“Representativeness” ranking of other parties by communist successor supporters	3.15	3.59	3.98	3.39
Ranking of party by party supporters	6.11	6.43	6.43	6.18

This asymmetry also suggests why the partners of the communist successors are more likely to be punished by the electorate in the next round of elections for their coalition participation. As we can see from the table below, parties which cross the regime divide and form coalitions across it lose a far greater proportion of their electorate than other incumbents (or the parties which *formed* the divide-crossing coalitions).

**TABLE 3. Indicators of electoral punishment of parties which crossed the regime divide.**

Country	Average electoral support lost by incumbents in the next election, as % of their previous support.	Electoral support lost by parties which crossed the regime divide, as % of their previous support.
Poland	-29.8%	-53% <sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The data comes from Gabor Toka at Central European University, and the “Party Systems and Electoral Alignments in East Central Europe” project public opinion polls, conducted from 1992 to 1996. The project employed several polling agencies: CBOS in Poland, STEM in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and Median in Hungary.

<sup>37</sup> Formally speaking, the party who was punished by voters for forming a cross-camp coalition, the PSL, was also from the communist successor camp. However, it acted “as if” it had come from the opposition,

Czech Republic	No crossing of regime divide	
Slovakia	-6%	-29%
Hungary	-18.9%	-60%

As we can see, parties which cross the regime divide lose support in the next elections at rates that are anywhere from twice to five times as high as other incumbent parties do. This is in keeping with the finding that even though coalitions undertake to assume collective responsibility for policy outcomes, both voters and other politicians differentiate between coalition partners and their issue priorities, shifting support from one party to another depending on the perceived competence of a given party to deal with the problem at hand.<sup>38</sup> The voters thus punished the “traitors”—the parties that defected, rather than those who invited the defection.

To see how the process of coalition formation worked in East Central Europe, and under what conditions the regime divide played a significant role, the next section turns to a detailed set of case studies of coalition formation among a sub-set of actors, the communist successor parties.

### III. Communist Successor Parties

The communist successor parties’ efforts to form coalitions best illustrate the importance of the regime divide. First, they are the key representative of the regime divide—the parties of the discredited communist regime. As such, they faced a paradox: their past as the communist rulers made them simultaneously the most experienced and the most discredited political actors after 1989. Even when the Civic Forum, Solidarity, and Public Against Violence fragmented in 1990-91 and transformed into several smaller

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developed a strong identity as an agricultural/ Christian party, and attracted conservative rural voters, many of whom were strongly opposed to the communist successor party.

competitors, their successors were still united in their opposition to the communist past and the communist successors. As a result, the successor parties were ostracised and isolated in the parliaments as the unwelcome reminders (and remainders) of the communist regime.

Second, the parties were uniformly interested in pursuing coalitions and cooperating with other parties. However, they varied in achieving this objective: three out of the four parties examined did form government coalitions, and of those three, two were able to cross the regime divide. Of the two that formed coalitions across the divide, one was severely punished for doing so by its electorate, while the other retained its electorate and instead saw its junior coalition partner tumble in the polls. Therefore, these parties provide the variation in the outcomes that make it possible to examine the regime divide and its effects on coalition formation in the democratic East Central Europe.

In Poland, coalitions formed exclusively within the camps created by the regime divide. The regime divide itself was characterised by recent, and enmical, confrontation—the rise of the independent trade union Solidarity in 1980, its transformation into a nation-wide opposition movement that claimed a third of the adult population, and the communist regime’s crackdown and imposition of martial law in December 1981. As a result, the relationship between the post-communist and post-opposition forces was highly adversarial (despite many personal ties in the liberal wings of both), and many of the main players are still active on the political scene. Therefore, even though the communist party transformed itself radically into a moderate social-

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<sup>38</sup> Anderson, Christopher. “The Dynamics of Public Support for Coalition Governments,” *Comparative Political Studies* October 1995, 350-383.

democratic, pro-reform force, it has been unable to form a single coalition with parties arising from the former opposition to communist rule.

Thus, after the first free elections, held in 1991, the Polish communist successor (The Social Democracy of Poland, SdRP) came in second with 12% of the vote, but was shut out of the coalition formation process. Despite its internal unity and professionalism, the party continued to be excluded, *a priori*, from consideration as a coalition partner or parliamentary ally. As the SdRP leaders soberly admitted, “we have no illusions. There won’t be any room in the new government for us. It will instead be probably formed by the various groupings still united by the word ‘Solidarity.’”<sup>39</sup> In 1991, “despite many programmatic similarities, no other party would dream of entering an alliance with the [SdRP]. It merely hoped for a strong parliamentary presence.”<sup>40</sup> Its policy proposals were also ignored, even as the party supported the radical economic and political reforms of 1989-91, including the economic reform package of February 1992, in an attempt to appear “responsible” and gain greater acceptance.<sup>41</sup> The SdRP rather bitterly concluded that “sometimes we’d get the feeling that even if we proposed something that was most obvious and beneficial, it would still be rejected on the basis of its origins.”<sup>42</sup>

Nor did the top vote-getter, the Democratic Union (UD), a centrist post-Solidarity formation well-respected for its moderation and expertise, succeed in forming a coalition. In the highly fragmented Polish parliament,<sup>43</sup> other post-Solidarity forces initially refused to form a coalition with the UD because its leader, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, had called for

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<sup>39</sup> *Trybuna Ludu*, 31 October-1 November 1991.

<sup>40</sup> Millard, Frances “The Shaping of the Polish Party System, 1989-93,” *East European Politics and Societies*, Fall 1994: 467-494, p. 843.

<sup>41</sup> Jozef Oleksy, quoted in *Zycie Warszawy*, 17 March 1993.

<sup>42</sup> Wiatr, Jerzy *Krotki Sejm*. Warsaw: BGW, 1993, p. 35.

<sup>43</sup> Five governments formed and fell in the first four years of its existence, and parliamentary groupings proved highly unstable.

reconciliation and a “thick line” to be drawn between the two regimes, rather than for the prosecution of communists and their successors. Instead, Jan Olszewski initially formed a minority coalition dominated by Christian Democrat groupings, only to fall from power in July 1992. This coalition minimized the differences in both worldview and in economic policy, but was too small to govern effectively. His successor, Hanna Suchocka, thus formed a coalition that included both the Christian Democrats and the centrist UD, and the equally liberal Liberal-Democratic Congress (KLD) and Polish Economic Program (PPG). The differences between the Christian Democrats and the coalition partners centered around both “worldview” and economic issues. The Christian Democrats proved an especially disruptive force in the parliament, routinely torpedoing proposals they saw as “anti-family” or anti-Church (or too brazenly “liberal” in their economic stances). Nevertheless, the UD also excluded the communist successor from consideration as a coalition partner.

The Suchocka government fell in June 1993. In September of that year, the communist successor SdRP won the elections, with 20% of the vote. The divisions over joining its government in Poland fell precisely along the cleavage first expressed in 1980-81—all the successor forces of Solidarity rejected a coalition with the SdRP, despite ideological similarities among both the Labor Union (UP) and UD.<sup>44</sup>

Although the SdRP would later claim that most of its electorate knew ahead of time that the only possible coalition was with the post-communist Peasants’ Party (PSL),<sup>45</sup> it tried to avoid this “inevitability.” The party had already formed some local coalitions

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<sup>44</sup> The UP, with its dual heritage of Solidarity and communist reformists, supported the coalition without joining it until June 1994, when it left in protest over the continuation of economic austerity policies.

<sup>45</sup> Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, *Nasz Program dla Polski: Trzy lata Pracy Parlamentarnej SLD*. Warsaw: SLD Parliamentary Club, 1996, p. 8.

with the UD,<sup>46</sup> and had attempted to reach out several times on the national level.<sup>47</sup> Immediately after the elections, SdRP leader Aleksander Kwasniewski repeatedly insisted that the UD would be the best partner for the SdRP, as it would reassure the West of the new government's reformist continuity.<sup>48</sup> For its part, the leftist UP, with its Solidarity roots, responded that it would join the SdRP only if the Democratic Union would. Although the UP had former communist reformers in its ranks, it argued that this "is the limit—one which we will not cross."<sup>49</sup> The Democratic Union, in turn, promptly responded that it would not join any coalitions with the communist successors.<sup>50</sup>

Faced with this rejection from its first choice of partners, the SdRP was thus forced to form a government coalition with the Peasants' Party, with whom it shared a communist heritage, but very few policy stances. From the start, the two had very different economic and political aims. Differences immediately emerged, and persisted, over the Concordat with the Church, agricultural policy, market reform, local administration reforms, and privatisation.<sup>51</sup> As an outgoing finance minister put it, the PSL acted as a brake on reforms, "thinking only about how much it can grab for the peasants."<sup>52</sup> At the same time, the PSL treated the coalition as an endless source of patronage,<sup>53</sup> continually criticised the

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<sup>46</sup> *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* 5 August 1994. The Freedom Union's leader, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, initially forbade such coalitions with the SLD, but revoked this stance after such coalitions formed anyway in Cracow, Warsaw, Konin, Pabianice, Poznan, and other cities.

<sup>47</sup> For example, it offered to stabilise the government of Hanna Suchocka, but she refused to negotiate with the party. *Rzeczpospolita* 3 September 1993.

<sup>48</sup> *Rzeczpospolita* 25-6 September 1993.

<sup>49</sup> *Sztandar*, quoting Borowik of UP, 14 March 1996.

<sup>50</sup> *Trybuna Ludu*, 27 September 1993, and 28 September 1993..

<sup>51</sup> *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, Dwa Lata Pracy Parlamentarnej (19.9.1993-19.9.1995)*. Warsaw: SLD Parliamentary Club, 1995. This was despite the informal understanding that SdRP was in charge of the economy, while the PSL concerned itself with state administration.

<sup>52</sup> Marek Borowski, resignation speech, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 7 February 1994.

<sup>53</sup> For example, the PSL nominated, in 22 out of 30 cases, its own party activists to various posts. The SLD did so with only 1 out of 8. *Trybuna*, 7 February 1994.

SdRP, knowing full well that the SdRP had no other potential coalition partners, and refused to accept collective responsibility for government actions.<sup>54</sup>

For the UP and UW (Freedom Union (UW), as the party was known after the UD and the Liberal Democratic Congress, KLD, united after the 1993 elections), personal or ideological similarities had little effect on the parties' refusal to form a coalition with the SdRP. Despite personal friendships between UW, UP, and SdRP political elites, their shared experiences during the Round Table negotiations of 1989, and their shared views, especially on the role of the Church in Polish society, access to abortion, religion in schools, and foreign relations, the UP and UW could not afford an open alliance with the SdRP. For the UW, especially, its shared claims of expertise and managerial competence with the SdRP meant that one of the few things that distinguished it from the post-communists was its origin in Solidarity. An open, formal, alliance with the SdRP, UW leaders feared, would eliminate the UW from the political scene—such a coalition would only be possible if “a massive disaster” occurred, and the rest of the political scene became extremely radicalised.<sup>55</sup> In 1997, when the post-Solidarity forces returned to power within the AWS electoral coalition, the familiar pattern re-emerged. The UW chose to join the populist (and fractious) AWS in a government coalition, even though the UW knew much of the AWS was opposed to the continuation of economic and administrative reform.

Thus, the patterns of Polish coalition formation follow the expectations of the reputation model. Despite both ideological proximity and numerical need, parties from the Solidarity camp refused to form alliances with parties from the post-communist camp.

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<sup>54</sup> Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, *Nasz Program dla Polski: Trzy lata Pracy Parlamentarnej SLD*. Warsaw: SLD Parliamentary Club, 1996, p. 15.

Within the post-Solidarity camp, policy proximity determined coalition potential in the first Christian Democratic coalition. Once this coalition was expanded to include the liberal UD, KLD, and PPG parties, it reverted to a simple regime divide coalition. The two corollaries also held: first, the SdRP consistently sought cooperation, and no other party sought a coalition with it. Second, the PSL was “punished” for its coalition: in 1997, it received 7.3% of the vote, down from 15% in 1993, while the SdRP increased its share of the vote from 20 to 27%. Ironically, although the PSL had its roots in a communist satellite party, it was trying to appeal to peasants by emphasising its post-1989 character. Forming a coalition with the SdRP belied those claims.

In contrast, the Hungarian political parties, accepted the communist successor (the MSzP) more readily, because the divide that emerged from the recent communist past was far shallower. The major state-society conflict of the communist era came in 1956, and the Hungarian Uprising. After the uprising was brutally put down,<sup>56</sup> a consensus emerged between the party and its societal opposition, centered around social stability and the prevention of another such tragedy.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the main conflict had occurred over 30 years before the transition to democracy, so that the vast majority of the players had left the political scene. As a result, the relationship between the party and the society was far less adversarial. Therefore, the Hungarian party’s past was nowhere near the liability that the Polish party’s was, and its transformation into a social democratic party was far more credible to both the electorate and to the other parties.

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<sup>55</sup> *Wprost*, 22 March 1998.

<sup>56</sup> A Soviet invasion put down the insurrection, with little thought to sparing either civilian lives or livelihoods. In the subsequent “reconstruction,” over 2,000 people were executed, the party was dissolved and reconstructed anew, and a brief reign of terror followed.

<sup>57</sup> The party slowly liberalised both the political and the economic spheres, even allowing partly-free elections. By 1970, 25% of the parliamentarians in the Hungarian parliament were non-party members, as



The Hungarian communist successor, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) was initially isolated in 1990-92 by the new government led by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), but was able to overcome this marginalisation.<sup>58</sup> Throughout 1990-94, despite the fact that its ideology and support base were the closest to the existing coalition,<sup>59</sup> it was not asked to join it.<sup>60</sup> However, other opposition parties welcomed its “exit from its political ghetto,” even if they did not immediately seek cooperation with the MSzP.<sup>61</sup> The MSzP avoided direct confrontation with the government, and instead focused on “acting responsibly in the parliament and displaying internal unity.”<sup>62</sup> As the conflicts increased within the coalition and in the parliament, the MSzP and its insistence on moderation began to look increasingly attractive to the Hungarian parliamentary groupings,<sup>63</sup> especially given its support for the economic and political reforms.

The MSzP’s electoral victory in 1994 meant that for once, a communist successor party did not experience the asymmetry of unilaterally asking for coalition support. After winning the 1994 elections with 33% of the vote and 54% of the seats, the MSzP formed a governing coalition with the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz), a liberal party arising from the pre-1989 opposition to the communist regime.<sup>64</sup> Ideologically, it was not

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were 50% of the local officials (Open Society Archives, G 24 September 1987, CMD, *London Times* 2 December 1970.)

<sup>58</sup> Agh, Attila. “The Hungarian Socialist Party and Party Change,” *Party Politics* October 1997: 427-444, p. 430.

<sup>59</sup> Markowski 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Szarvas, Laszlo. “Parties and party-Factions in the Hungarian Parliament,” Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition No. 34, Hungarian Electronic Library, 1992.

<sup>61</sup> Reisch, Alfred A. “Hungarian Socialist Party Looks Ahead,” RFE/RL, 29 March 1991.

<sup>62</sup> Reisch 1991, p. 25.

<sup>63</sup> O’Neil, Patrick. “Revolution From Within: Institutional Analysis, Transitions from Authoritarianisms, and the Case of Hungary” *World Politics* July 1996; 579-603.

<sup>64</sup> The MSzP took 9 out of the 12 ministries, leaving Internal Affairs, Culture and Education, and Transport to the SzDSz.

necessarily the closest to the MSzP.<sup>65</sup> However, the SzDSz could join the MSzP coalition both because its reformist elites had formed considerable personal ties earlier, in the late 1980s.<sup>66</sup> More importantly, the SzDSz elites felt that after also being excluded from power in 1990, they now had their one chance to govern, and with a competent, ideologically moderate partner.

Despite the shallower regime divide, however, the SzDSz was “punished” by its electorate for the coalition—its support dropped from 19.7% in 1994 to 7.8% in the 1998 elections. Moreover, the new coalition that formed after the 1998 elections, led by the centrist Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz), excluded the SzDSz (along with an extremist nationalist party, the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP), but included all of the other non-communist parties. Fidesz was punishing the SzDSz for its cooperation with the MSzP, and reasserting the primacy of the regime divide.

Thus, the Hungarian coalition patterns are in keeping with the predictions of the reputation-seeking model. The shallower regime divide was more easily overcome by the political parties themselves. However, the voters still punished the “collaborator” with the post-communist party (far more than the communist successor itself, who had largely retained its share of the vote in the 1998 elections). As a result, the subsequent coalition excluded the “collaborator,” and was formed along the regime divide.

For their part, Czech parliamentary coalitions formed exclusively within the former opposition’s camp, without even considering the communist successor as a viable

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<sup>65</sup> Markowski 1997 argues that Fidesz was actually closest to the MSzP. However, Ktischelt et al 1999 place it next to the MSzP on several dimensions.

<sup>66</sup> Moreover, several SzDSz leaders, such as Janos Kis, Miklos Haraszti, and Gaspar Tamas all had strongly Leftist views, and “many SzDSz leaders came from old party cadre families.” Szelenyi, Szonja, Ivan Szelenyi, and Winifred Poster. “Interests and Symbols in Post-Communist Political Culture: the Case of Hungary.” *American Sociological Review*. June 1996: 466-477, p. 475.

potential partner. Even though this meant governing as a minority government after 1997, no party wanted to cross the regime divide and form a coalition with the communist successor, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM). This was largely because of the depth of the regime divide in the Czech Republic, the result of the party's refusal to reform its policies or engage the opposition after the Prague Spring of 1968. Instead of negotiation, however adversarial, the communist party consistently repressed the opposition and persecuted its representatives. After 1989, this cleavage was further exacerbated by the communist successor's inability to transform itself into a more moderate party, and by the active deepening of the isolation by the President, Vaclav Havel, who denounced the party at every turn.<sup>67</sup>

As a result, the other parties excluded the KSCM *a priori* from any governing or electoral coalitions, putting them on par with the neo-fascist Republicans. The Czech party's legislative proposals were kept off the agenda in several cases, prompting the party to declare that it would now pursue only policy proposals in "areas of interest."<sup>68</sup> Instead of negotiating with the KSCM, the other parties attempted to delegalise it.<sup>69</sup> The party continually complained of societal and parliamentary ostracism, and its elites admitted the KSCM had little chance of widespread acceptance.<sup>70</sup> Despite repeated efforts to establish good relations with other opposition parties, the KSCM was excluded from consideration as a potential partner.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For example, even as he met with the representatives of all the other parliamentary parties, including the right-wing extremist SPR-RSC, Havel refused to meet with the representatives of the KSCM.

<sup>68</sup> *Dokumenty II Sjezdu KSCM*, p. 12.

<sup>69</sup> The Prague District Attorney even tried to shut down the party, under a 1990 law that forbade anti-democratic organisations. Another law in 1993 called the party a "criminal organisation, anti-democratic and anti-human rights" and held the party responsible for the country's decline under communism. (Vachudova 1993, p. 30.)

<sup>70</sup> *Dokumenty II Sjezdu KSCM*, p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Dokumenty IV Sjezdu KSCM*, p. 48.

Repeated efforts were rebuffed by potential partners.<sup>72</sup> Most importantly, the one party the KSCM had initially identified as an attractive coalition partner, the Social Democrats (CSSD), rejected the KSCM outright. The Czech Social Democrat leaders declared that no coalitions were possible with the communist successor KSCM due to “irreconcilable value differences” between the two parties and because the KSCM “lost its place among the system of democratic parties” in the Czech Republic.<sup>73</sup>

Instead, the parliament was dominated from 1990 to 1997 by the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), one of the offshoots of the Civic Forum, the mass movement that brought down communism in the Czech Republic in 1989. The ODS steadfastly refused to negotiate with the Czech communist successors, and instead formed a coalition with the two parties whose policy goals were closest its own: the ODA and the KDU-CSL. However, the coalition fell apart in December 1997, after revelations of ODS corruption.

After a caretaker government, the 1998 elections brought in the Social Democrats (CSSD) into power. The ODS refused to form a grand coalition (or rather, demanded so many cabinet ministries as to make farce of the concept), and the other parties refused to enter the coalition with the leftist CSSD. Since the KSCM was the one remaining potential partner, its leaders had hoped for an informal coalition with the Social Democrats. However, the Social Democrats once again refused this option, and instead chose to govern as a minority government.

Thus, the Czech patterns of coalition formation also confirm the regime divide model. Parties formed coalitions exclusively within the former opposition camp, given the extremely deep regime divide. Minority governments formed, rather than parties risking

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<sup>72</sup> Including the HSD-SMS, a regional party, Jiri Dienstbier’s Civic Movement (the other off-shoot of Civic Forum, with ODS), and the Czech Socialist Party.

electoral punishment. Finally, while the communist successor desperately sought allies, it was thwarted by all the other parties in doing so. The regime divide was so deep as to make impossible the one coalition predicted by both minimum winning and spatial proximity models, between the Social Democrats and the communist successor in 1998.

Finally, the Slovak coalition patterns are perhaps the most unorthodox, in keeping with the nature of its nascent democratic system. They also illustrate the conditions under which the regime divide can be overcome. Although Slovakia was under the ossified Czechoslovak regime for the entire communist period, its regime divide took on a different character. Three factors contributed to a shallower regime divide than in the Czech Republic: first, the repression of the opposition after 1968 was milder in Slovakia.<sup>74</sup> Second, Slovakia experienced real gains, both in the form of economic subsidies and some measure of regional autonomy, after 1968. Third, it was the unspoken understanding (and after 1989, a main post-communist claim) that the communist system in Slovakia could have been different, if it were not for the Czech domination. Therefore, although the regime-society conflict was as recent as it was in the Czech Republic, it was not quite as deep or as bitter. For its part, the communist successor, the Party of the Democratic Left, (SDL'), was largely able to transform itself, the result of the same federative policies after 1968, and the pool of reformist elites they allowed to flourish.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, communists dispersed into almost all the main parties in Slovakia after 1989. These, in turn, had by 1992 either firmly committed themselves to democratic rule

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<sup>73</sup> Petra Buzkova, in *Mlada Fronta Dnes*, 28 January 1993.

<sup>74</sup> The pool of opponents was considerably smaller, and the reform efforts in 1968 were far milder, so that there was less of an official backlash.

<sup>75</sup> Specifically, the Slovak elites which led the party after 1989 arose through an oversight—the strict centralisation of power in the Czechoslovak communist party meant that as orders flowed from Prague to the Slovak regional party heads, Bratislava was largely neglected by party supervision and control

(KDH, SDL', DU), or made minimal commitments to democracy and the rule of law, instead turning to populist and nationalist appeals (HZDS, SNS, and later, ZRS). Therefore, in addition to the regime divide, a cross-cutting cleavage ran between "democratic" and "populist" parties.

Vladimir Meciar (himself a former communist) and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) ruled Slovakia beginning with the 1992 elections. A populist party that had little truck with the intricacies of policymaking, the HZDS formed a coalition with the nationalist SNS in 1992, and did so again after winning the September 1994 elections. The heavyhanded tactics of Prime Minister Meciar meant that the communist successor SDL' was one of the few only stable and consistent defenders of democracy within Slovakia.<sup>76</sup> Given the relatively small pool of intellectuals and politicians in Slovakia, representatives of democratic parties had fewer options to choose from.

Therefore, the "democratic" parties banded together against the HZDS, which they perceived as a threat to the democratic system itself. As a result, the SDL' could more easily overcome the regime divide,<sup>77</sup> and more importantly, would have to participate in any coalition that replaced Meciar. In March 1994, then, after months of negotiation with the HZDS to moderate its policies,<sup>78</sup> the SDL' joined the Christian Democrats and three smaller splinters from the HZDS to bring down the Meciar government.

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commissions. Pockets of reform thought, such as those in the Marxist Leninist Institute of the Central Committee of the party survived.

<sup>76</sup> The SDL' was instrumental in removing Meciar from office in March 1994, and was promptly punished for this after the September 1994 elections won by Meciar. During the "night of long knives" in 3-4 November 1994, Meciar and the HZDS purged any non-coalition government officials, committee chairs, secretaries, etc.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Dusan Dorotin, 4 February 1997, Bratislava, and *Nove Slovo* 18 July 1991.

<sup>78</sup> See CSTK 8 June 1993, for SDL' accusations that HZDS refused grand coalition at a time when it could have prevented an economic and political crisis. The negotiations continued throughout the summer and fall of 1993. By November 1994, the Republican Council of the SDL' set out the conditions under which it

As a result, the Slovak communist successor not only crossed the regime divide, but formed a coalition with its ideological opposite—the Christian Democrats. Joining them in the coalition were three centrist splinters.<sup>79</sup> Despite its self-identification as a Left party, the SDL’ implemented policies designed to speed up privatisation, free up the market, increase internal competition and foreign trade, and did so with the Christian Democrats, traditionally the anathema of both the communist and socialist movements. The policy distance between the Christian Democrats and the SDL’ was the largest possible, and bigger than between any other two parties.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, in allying itself with the former opposition, the SDL’ crossed the regime divide. It could do so because the divide was shallower and because a real threat existed to democracy that made such a coalition imperative, and caused the parties to care less about their immediate reputation with the voters. Nonetheless, as the junior partner in a coalition that straddled the regime divide, the SDL’ was punished for its betrayal of its camp. In the elections held later that year, in September 1994, the SDL’ barely won it 10% of the votes, instead of the 25% it had expected.

Nonetheless, the SDL’ persevered in its opposition to the HZDS. Given the common roots in the Slovak Communist Party of both Meciar and the SDL’ leaders, several leaders in both the HZDS and the SDL’ felt the alliance was a “natural” one.<sup>81</sup> However, joining the HZDS in a coalition would have meant not only risking submission to a

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would enter the coalition: the removal of the SNS from the coalition, greater transparency in privatisation, and no more attacks on the president. (*Narodna Obroda*, 21 February 1996.)

<sup>79</sup> These were the Alternative of Political Realism and Alliance of Democrats (which later joined to form the Democratic Union), and the National Democratic Party.

<sup>80</sup> Markowski 1997.

<sup>81</sup> It would also stand to benefit the shared constituency of the two parties, the so-called “red managers”—former party directors who now managed newly privatised enterprises. However, by April 1995, such discussions became moot, as the HZDS no longer wanted to deal with SDL’, and especially with its leader, Peter Weiss. (TASR, *Daily News Monitor* 3 October 1994.)

highly autocratic party, but also losing the SDL's hard-earned reputation as a protector of democracy. At the same time, however, the party did not wish to cross the regime divide again. Therefore, the SDL' refused to enter either the HZDS coalition, or the anti-HZDS electoral coalition that formed in 1997, the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). Instead, it ran by itself in the 1998 elections. It then joined the new government coalition with the SDK, taking 9 out of the 20 governmental ministries, in the name of preserving democracy.

Slovak coalition patterns largely confirm the reputation hypothesis. On the one hand, a shallower regime divide allowed the communist successors and the opposition heirs to form coalitions. The threat to the democratic system (in the form of the HZDS) caused the parties to pay less attention to their reputations, and more to preserving the political system in which they could survive. Nonetheless, the voters punished the party which crossed the divide, the SDL', in the subsequent elections. On the other hand, the other divide that oriented post-1989 politics in the country was between the forces of "standard" democratic politics, and those of populism, for whom nationalism, patronage, and the oppression of political opponents was a *modus operandi*. As a result, there was also less asymmetry in coalition formation between the communist and opposition successors. The Slovak case thus cautions us against assuming that the regime divide will be the only cleavage driving coalition formation—an even more fundamental disagreement over the commitment to the new system and its institutionalisation can trump the regime divide, and the parties' focus on it as a chief determinant of their reputation.



Overall, however, the regime divide continued to structure coalition formation, as parties sought to develop clear and stable reputations. Parties constrained themselves, either by eliminating some possibilities altogether, or by making certain coalitions and parliamentary actions far less likely.<sup>82</sup> Specifically, the past state-society relationship determined the relative ease and flexibility with which communist successor parties formed coalitions.

Thus, pure spatial and minimum winning coalition models do not explain the patterns of coalition formation in these new democracies as well as an explanation that takes into account the parties' desire to develop a stable and clear reputation, and the enormous constraints the regime divide places on coalition formation as a result. 85% of the coalitions formed along the faultlines of the regime divide, and "traitors" were punished at unusually high rates. Given this divide, ideological proximity can even act as an *obstacle* to coalition formation when the reputation of the formateur or the dominant party in the coalition would adversely affect the support of the would-be coalition partners. In the Polish and Czech cases, parties ostensibly close to the communist successors refused to form coalitions with them. Similarly, the Slovak SDL' actually formed a coalition with the party *farthest* away from it ideologically.<sup>83</sup> However, such decisions make sense once we take into account that the effects of the regime divide can outweigh ideological similarities.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to explain why some coalitions have formed so much more readily than others in East Central Europe, defying the predictions of both ideological and

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<sup>82</sup> Strom, Kaare, Budge, Ian, and Laver, Michael J. "Constraints on Cabinet Formation in Parliamentary Democracies," *American Journal of Political Science* May 1994, pp. 303-335.

policy-centered theories. This poses a problem for theories of coalition formation, since “elegant mathematical formulations of bargaining power do not respond well to the *ad hoc* deletion of parties from the universe” of potential partners.<sup>84</sup>

The conclusion is that parties in new democracies will form along the regime divide, since their first priority after the democratic transition is to develop a consistent identity and a reputation that will allow them to gain a steady electorate. The deeper this regime divide, the less likely the formation of coalitions that bridge it. As a corollary, old-regime parties are more likely to seek than to be sought in coalition formation, illustrating the “asymmetry” inherent in this process of reputation building. Second, parties which cross the divide are likely to be punished by the voters in the next round of elections. So long as they do, the divide will persist. When the voters reduce their punishment of the “collaborators,” or if the parties begin to care less about their reputations, the regime divide is likely to decrease.

It is important to note that this discussion has focused on coalition *formation*, rather than on coalition *stability*. There is some evidence to suggest that the fewer the choices of potential coalition partners, the more stable the coalition. Moreover, party policy and ideological diversity both have been found to determine coalition stability—yet it is not clear whether these factors would play the same role in new democracies.<sup>85</sup> Another obvious direction for further research is to test the hypothesis generated in this paper

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<sup>83</sup> Markowski 1997, p. 233.

<sup>84</sup> Laver in Pridham, pp. 41-2.

<sup>85</sup> Gregory Luebbert has thus argued that regime attributes (fragmentation, number of parties, ideological polarisation, level of influence of opposition parties), coalition attributes (majority status, ideologically compatible, minimal winning), structure of bargaining process, and critical events all determine the stability of governing coalitions. Party policy is thus more responsible for the formation of coalitions, than for their stability. (Luebbert, Gregory, pp. 145-155). Paul Warwick has argued that ideological diversity determines cabinet stability, and instability is the result of ideological differences among the coalition

against other cases of transitions from authoritarian regimes, such as Southern Europe, Central and Latin America, and post-war Western Europe. While policy and ideology can bring coalitions together or keep parties apart in established democracies, the parties' origin in the previous regime, and their quest for developing a stable identity and reputation, may be the most important determinant of coalition formation in new democracies.

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partners, rather than of coalition size or the fragmentation of the political system. (Warwick, Paul. *Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies*. Cambridge: CUP, 1994, p. 83.)

## Appendix A. ELECTORAL COALITIONS:

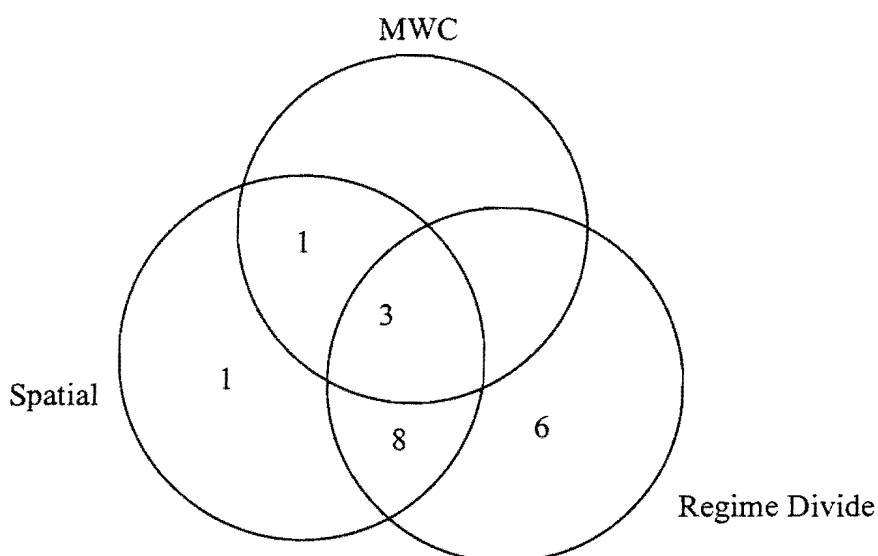
KEY to “predicted by”:  
 M minimum winning coalition  
 E economic spatial proximity  
 V worldview spatial proximity  
 R regime divide

As explained in the text, the criteria for a coalition fulfilling the predictions of each explanation: if not other coalition/ combination of parties could have produced a coalition closer to the minimum winning (50% +1, except as noted), irrespective of ideological positions, the coalition is coded as Minimum Winning.

If the coalition either minimizes the average Euclidean distance among its partners, **or** if it minimizes the distance on either the economic or worldview dimensions, it is coded as fulfilling Spatial Proximity criteria.

Finally, if the coalition partners come from **either** the former ruling camp **or** the former opposition, the coalition is coded as fulfilling the criteria of the Regime Divide model.

The number of coalitions consistent with the predictions of each model can be summarized as follows:



## Poland:

Dates	Prime Minister	Participating Parties	Predicted by:
9.89-1.91	Mazowiecki	OKP, SD, ZSL, PZPR	N/a <sup>86</sup>
1.91-12.91	Bielecki	KLD, PC, UD, OKP <sup>87</sup>	E V R
12.91-7.92	Olszewski	PC, PL, SLCh, ZChN, PChD	V R
7.92-10.93	Suchocka	KLD, UD, PPG, PL, SLCh, ZChN	R
10.93-3.95	Pawlak	SLD, PSL	V R
3.95-1.96	Oleksy	SLD, PSL	V R
2.96-10.97	Cimoszewicz	SLD, PSL	V R
11.97-	Buzek	AWS, UD	R

## Czech Republic:

Dates	Prime Minister	Participating Parties	Predicted by:
6.90-6.92	Klaus	OF, KDU, HSD-SMS	E V R
6.92-11.97	Klaus	ODS, KDU-CSL, ODA	M E V R
11.97-6.98	Tosovsky	ODS <sup>88</sup>	R
7.98-	Zeman	CSSD <sup>89</sup>	R

## Slovakia:

Dates	Prime Minister	Participating Parties	Predicted by:
6.90-3.91	Meciar	VPN, KDH	M E R
3.91-6.92	Carnogursky	VPN, <sup>90</sup> KDH, DS	R
6.92-3.94	Meciar	HZDS, SNS	M V R
3.94-9.94	Moravcik	KDH, SDL', DU <sup>91</sup>	
10.94-10.98	Meciar	HZDS, ZRS, SNS	V R
10.98-	Dzurinda	SDK, SDL', SMK, SOP	E

## Hungary:

Dates	Prime Minister	Participating Parties	Predicted by:
5.90-5.94	Antall	MDF, FKgP, KDNP	E V R
5.94-5.98	Horn	MSzP, SzDSz	M E V
5.98-	Orban	Fidesz, FKgP, MDF	R

<sup>86</sup> PZPR was the old communist party, guaranteed the four ministries it held at the time by the 1989 Round Table negotiations. Since its presence was guaranteed by previous agreement (and since its ministers had left by mid-90), its presence is not counted for the purposes of hypothesis-testing.

<sup>87</sup> By August 1990, several parties had arisen from the OKP, the Citizens' Parliamentary Club. Of the original 260 members, 52 had gone into ROAD (which became the UD shortly thereafter), 49 remained independent, 37 formed the PC, 36 the CHD, 28 Solidarity, 6 the FPD, and 6 ZChN. The supporters of Bielecki were largely the independents, and those unallied, within the rump OKP.

<sup>88</sup> Once the ODA and the KDU-CSL withdrew from the coalition in November 1997, the government was a caretaker minority government, supported by the CSSD, until the elections of June 1998.

<sup>89</sup> The CSSD minority government is tolerated by the ODS. Neither the US nor the KDU-CSL agreed to enter the coalition.

<sup>90</sup> In April 1991, Vladimir Meciar left the VPN, and formed the HZDS.

<sup>91</sup> To be more precise, the three small parties that then formed the DU.

## Appendix B. ELECTORAL RESULTS:

## POLAND 1991 (460 seats)

UD	12.3%	62
SLD	12%	59
ZChN	8.7%	49
PSL	8.7%	50
KPN	7.5%	51
POC (PC)	8.7%	42
KLD	7.5%	37
PL (Ruch Ludowy "Porozumienie Ludowe")	5.5%	28
NSZZ "S"	5.1%	27
PPPP/PPG	3.3%	13
SLCh	2.9%	10
German Minority	1.2%	7
ChD Chrzescjanska Demokracja	2.4%	5
Solidarnosc Pracy	2.1%	5
Polski Zwiazek Zachodni	.23%	4
PChD: Partia Chrzescjanskich Demokratow	3.3%	5
Partia X	.5%	3
Ruch Autonomii Slaska	.4%	2
Unia Polityki Realnej	2.3%	3
Other small parties <sup>92</sup>	2%	10

Source: Kancelaria Sejmu, Sejm Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, I Kadencja 25.11.91-31.5.93

## POLAND 1993

SLD	20.4%	171
PSL	15.4%	132
UD	10.6%	74
UP	7.3%	41
KPN	5.8%	22

<sup>92</sup> These were:

Stronnictwo Demokratyczne	1.4%	1
Ruch demokratyczno-Spoleczny	.5%	1
Prawoslawni (KWP)	.12%	1
Unia Wielkopolska		1
Wielkopsce I Polsce		1
Solidarnosc 80		1
LPW "Piast"		1
Zwiazek Podhalan		1
Krakowska Koalicja Solidarni z Prezydentem		1
Sojusz Kobiet Przeciw Trudnosciom Zycia		1

BBWR	5.4%	16
German Minority	.7%	4

## POLAND 1997

AWS	33.8%	201
SLD	27.1%	164
UW	13.4%	60
PSL	7.3%	27
ROP	5.6%	6
German Minority		2

## CZECH REPUBLIC 1990 (200 seats)

OF	49.5%	127
KSC	13%	32
SHD-SMS	10%	22
KDU	8.4%	19

## CZECH REPUBLIC 1992

ODS	29.7%	76
LB	14.1%	35
CSSD	6.5%	16
LSU	6.5%	16
HSD-SMS	5.9%	14
KDU-CSL	6.3%	15
ODA	5.9%	14
SPR-RSC	5.9%	14

## CZECH REPUBLIC 1996

ODS	29.6%	68
CSSD	26.4%	61
KSCM	10.3%	22
SPR-RSC	8%	18
KDU-CSL	8.1%	18
ODA	6.4%	13

## CZECH REPUBLIC 1998

CSSD	32.3%	74
ODS	27.7%	63
KSCM	11%	24
KDU-CSL	9%	20
US	8.6%	19

## SLOVAKIA 1990 (150 seats)

VPN	29.3%	48
KDH	19.2%	31

SNS	13.9%	22
SDL'	13.3%	22
Hungarian Coalition	8.6%	14
DS	4.4%	7
SZS	3.5%	6

## SLOVAKIA 1992

HZDS	37.3%	74
SDL	14.7%	29
Hungarian coalition	8.9%	18
KDH	8.9%	15
SNS	7.9%	14

## SLOVAKIA 1994

HZDS	35%	61
Spolocna Vol'ba	10.4%	18
KDH	10.1%	17
Hungarian Coalition	10.2%	17
DU	8.6%	15
ZRS	7.3%	13
SNS	5.4%	9

## SLOVAKIA 1998

HZDS	27%	43
SDK	26.3%	42
SDL'	14.7%	23
SNS	9.1%	14
SOP	8%	13

## HUNGARY 1990 (386 seats)

MDF	24.7%	165
SzDSz	21.4%	94
FKgP	11.7%	44
MSzP	10.5%	33
Fidesz	8.6%	22
KDNP	6.5%	21

## HUNGARY 1994

MSzP	33%	209
SzDSz	19.7%	70
MDF	11.7%	38
FKgP	8.8%	28
KDNP	7%	22
Fidesz	7%	20



## HUNGARY 1998

Fidesz	28.2%	148
MSzP	32.3%	134
FKgP	13.7%	48
SzDSz	7.8%	22
MDF	3.1%	17
MIEP	5.5%	14



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